



ASCEND JUSTICE

A word from our Executive Director

Dear Friends,

The days are short and (if you believe the meteorologists) a blizzard is approaching. In the midst of a dark season, it is no wonder that so many of us are celebrating holidays of light and hope.

This holiday season, my hope for you is that you take time to notice sources of light, that you celebrate them, and -- as best as we can -- we each create more light and hope in the world.

At Ascend Justice, that is our goal year-round.

Thank you all for being an important part of our work.

Sincerely,

Margaret R. Duval
Executive Director
Ascend Justice



Make Your Annual Donation Before Year End!

Sandra faced DCFS all alone and was indicated for child neglect even though she had seemingly done everything to protect herself and her newborn daughter.



"I think it is so incredibly important for people to understand what going through this does to families, and especially how important having the right representation means in these situations."

-Sandra

Your donation today allows Sandra to be properly represented so she can clear her name and keep her family together.

Help keep families like Sandra's together with your donation today!

Hear Sandra's
Story

Make a One Time Donation

Become a Monthly Donor

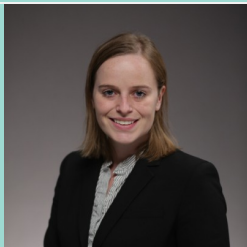
Staff Updates

Meet the newest members of our team



Sharon Castanaza

Sharon joins us as our new Client Support Coordinator. Sharon's previous role at Heartland Alliance as a Bilingual Youth Care Worker made her an ideal fit for this important role of providing the assistance and resources that our clients need. Welcome, Sharon!



Mary Kate Winn

Mary Kate is the newest member of our Incarcerated Survivor division as Staff Attorney. She has already made such an impact at Ascend Justice and we are so happy to have her as a member of the Ascend Justice family!

Well deserved promotions



Chloe Mullens

Chloe will start her new role as Senior Attorney in our Family Law division at the start of the new year. Chloe has worked hard as a Staff Attorney at Ascend Justice since 2017. Congratulations, Chloe, on this well earned promotion!

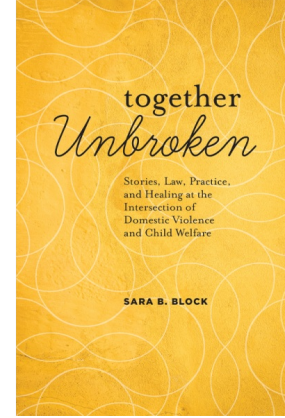
Our team continues to grow!
Check out our current job postings [here](#).

Special Announcements

In November, Ascend Justice staff members **Hannah Abrahams**, **Darcy Bautista**, and **Mary Kate Winn** each successfully became licensed attorneys. We are so proud of all the hard work each of you put forth to achieve this awesome accomplishment!
Congrats to you all!

Managing Director of Advocacy and Partnerships,
Sara Block, published her first book: *Together Unbroken: Stories, Law, Practice, and Healing at the Intersection of*

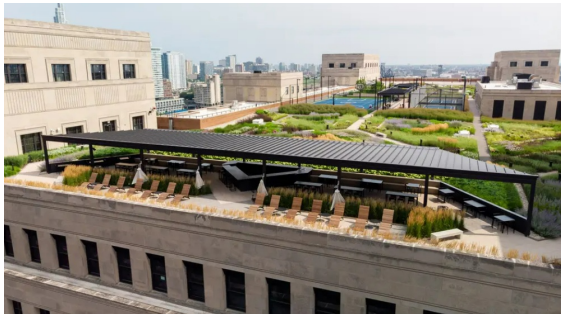
Domestic Violence and Child Welfare. You can purchase this book [here](#) using our exclusive 20% off coupon code: SBLOCK2023



Commemorate a significant life event or remember a loved one with a gift made in honor or in memory of those in your life. Every tribute gift provides the support needed to end the cycle of domestic abuse. [Make a tribute gift today!](#)

Celebrate with a
Gift

Celebration of Courage date announcement!



SAVE THE DATE!

Our annual fundraising event - Celebration of Courage - is officially set for **Thursday, June 8, 2023**. Once again, we will be taking in the view from the rooftop of The Old Post Office.

More details to come...Stay Tuned!

#GivingTuesday

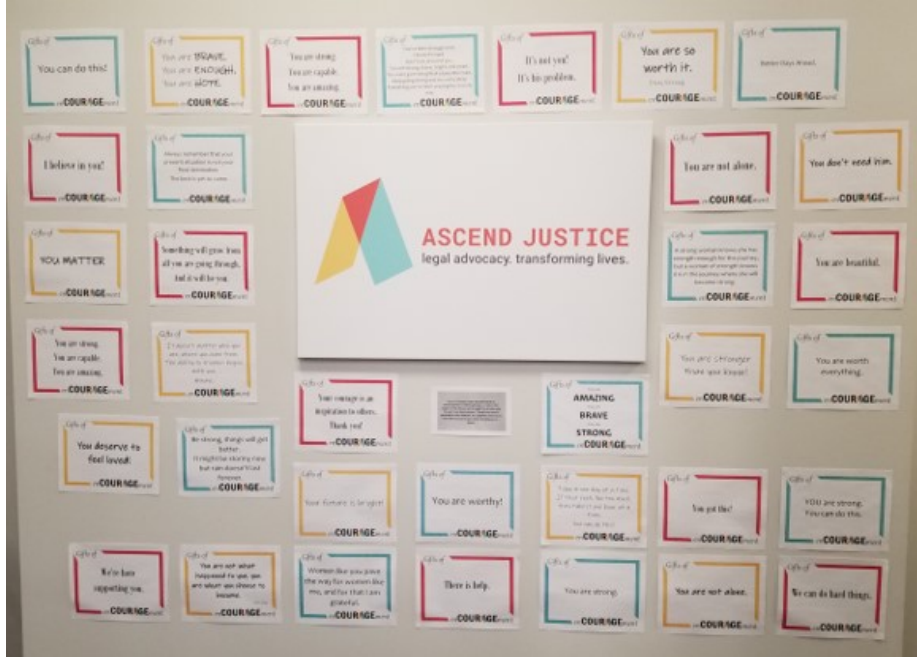
The national day of giving, #GivingTuesday, was celebrated on Tuesday, November 29th.

This year Ascend Justice introduced a project we called "**Gifts of enCOURAGEment**". Donors of \$100 or more (or monthly donors of \$10+ a month) were invited to submit their own words of encouragement that we placed on the walls of our office so that anyone - clients and employees alike - can read these words and find the inspiration and support they may need to carry on.

**\$6,404 was raised in a single day
and now our walls are full of your powerful and impactful words!**

The trauma that survivors of gender-based violence and those who are impacted by the child-welfare system is something that cannot be ignored. Our staff also has to find ways to work around the vicarious trauma that they keep going. That is why your words remain on our walls.

Your words continue to give us strength.



Thank you to all of our generous donors on #GivingTuesday for making this all possible.

Thank You Wednesday

You, our dedicated family of donors, give us so much to be thankful for! At our inaugural Thank You Wednesday event Board members, Young Professionals Board members, staff, and even a thankful former client gathered at our State Street office to reach out to as many donors as we could to thank them for their support.

Though we couldn't possibly reach everyone in one night, we want you to know how thankful we are for all that you do to support the important work we do each and every day.

If you haven't had a chance to make your donation this year, there's still time!

Donate Today

Funding from the Illinois Department of Human Services

Invest

Grow

Build

In early August, the Illinois Department of Human Services (IDHS) approved of a \$50 million increase in funding to organizations who are current IDHS grant funding recipients whose work focuses on gender-based violence.

We are excited to announce that Ascend Justice was one of those recipients!

Read about the ways that we are utilizing this wonderful opportunity to **Invest** in ourselves, **Grow** as an organization, and **Build** a model to serve more in Illinois.

IDHS funding

Mark Your Calendars!

Hanukkah - Sunday, December 18 to Monday, December 26

Christmas Day - Sunday, December 25

Kwanzaa - Monday, December 26 to Sunday, January 1

New Years Day - Sunday, January 1**

Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - Monday, January 16*

Lincolns' Birthday - Monday, February 13*

President's Day - Monday, February 20*

*our offices will be closed.

**in observance, our offices will be closed on Monday, January 2

To give our staff some well-deserved time off and to get ready for an eventful 2023, our offices will be closed starting Monday, December 26.

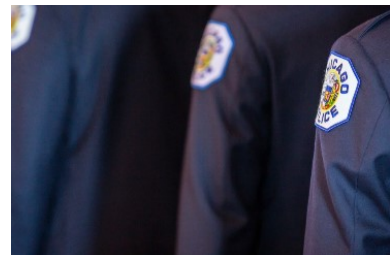
We will open again on Tuesday, January 3, 2023.

Happy New Year!

Worth Noting

How the legal system often fails domestic violence survivors acting in self defense

Director of our Incarcerated Survivors Project, **Alexis Mansfield**, and Rachel White-Domain of the Illinois Prison Project spoke with WBEZ following the first-degree murder charge against domestic violence survivor Keshia Golden.



Hear their conversation about how the legal system often fails domestic violence survivors acting in self defense [here](#).



Support Ascend Justice while shopping on Amazon

Select [Ascend Justice](#) as you [shop on Amazon](#) and a portion of each purchase goes to support our mission, bringing another individual closer to safety this holiday season.

[Get your shopping done and make an impact at the same time!](#)

Sara Block and Melissa Staas: A federal time bomb perpetuates cyclical trauma in the foster care system

In response to the 25th anniversary of the Adoption and Safe Families Act (AFSA), Ascend Justice's **Sara Block**, along with Melissa Staas of Legal Aid Chicago speak about the shortcomings of the AFSA that ultimately creates cyclical trauma.



Read the article [here](#).



violence at its worst

Why do survivors of domestic violence allow their abuser back into their lives? What help can you provide to someone who is in a domestic violence situation?

Danielle Parisi Ruffatto, Managing Director, Family Law & Protective Orders Division at Ascend Justice, shares insight.

Read the Sun Times article [here](#).

Illinois Supreme Court Announces Creation of Committee on Domestic Violence

The Illinois Supreme Court announced the creation of the Supreme Court Committee on Domestic Violence. The upcoming SAFE-T Act necessitates the need for this committee so courts can better serve the needs of survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Read the announcement [here](#).



The work that we do at Ascend Justice is only possible because of donations made from supporters like you.

Make a difference in the lives of those impacted by gender-based violence or the child welfare system.

Help them achieve safety and stability through the holistic legal advocacy and system reform Ascend Justice provides with a donation today.

[Make a One Time Donation](#)

[Become a Monthly Donor](#)

legal advocacy. transforming lives.

